Drawing, Adrift: Bengaluru – Mumbai – St Ives

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Bengaluru

The meeting of self and place that occurs through psychogeographic encounter is particularly charged for a British walker in India. The emotional and imaginative disorientation that is such a prized aspect of the *dérive* is prone to collapsing into traveller's tales, and the methodological potential of the *dérive* to reveal and subvert space is less evident than the likelihood of flooding it with self-referential histories, theories, tropes and affects. Guy Debord wrote nothing about India, yet was well aware of such dangers, when he clarified that: '…It should go without saying that we are not at all interested in any mere exoticism that may arise from the fact that one is exploring a neighbourhood for the first time. Besides its unimportance, this aspect of the problem is completely subjective and soon fades away' (Debord, 1958).

Nevertheless, I will temporarily risk such self-referentiality, since the self-reflexive nature of this article is necessary in order to address the *dérive* as a European construct. While there is a danger of foregrounding and therefore seeming to confirm a Eurocentric view, there are also ethical difficulties in leaving out the interconnections between countries, and subjectivities, that an engagement with India reveals in this context. This article emerges from the early stages of my research into artists' engagement with the Indian city,[1] and from my raw encounters with an unfamiliar environment, which were viscerally felt, and which, given the subjective nature of *dérive*, are worth investigating, even though they do not represent an endpoint in themselves.

Debord's caution is apt enough. For the British outsider, walking in India, with an imperial history at their back, the overwhelming first impressions tend to be those of subjective unfamiliarity on the one hand, and half-known relationship to inherited imperial baggage on the other. Brought up on stories by Frances Hodgson Burnett, Rumer Godden, Rudyard

[1] In 2018, elements of my initial research and resulting dialogues were developed to become the basis of an AHRC-funded network project, 'Performing the Periphery: The politics of performance in the context of urbanisation in South India', linking the University of Exeter Drama Department, UK and social and natural science researchers at the National Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru.

Kipling and others, India figured in my childhood imagination in a way that many other countries never did. However, although informing me more about myself than about India, to have this unfamiliarity – and suspect acquaintance - revealed to oneself can be a useful corrective to habits of walking and act as an alienation effect in relation to more familiar environments, making strange that very familiarity. To notice who one is, where one is, to notice what particular competences and identities are taken for granted in the European *dérive*, gives something back to the *dérive* itself – a way to detach it from the legacy of the *flâneur*, larking about along the Parisian pavement, with all the privilege of one who intends no trouble and feels no anxiety.

In the simplest sense, to *dérive* in Bengaluru, I had to revise everything I ever knew about roads. It was necessary to walk straight into the traffic – something so counter-intuitive I felt as though I had to become a different person. A half-mile *dérive* in the late afternoon, on January 12th 2017, wandering on and off M. S. Ramaiah Road, was a surprisingly unsettling experience.

In Lauren Elkin's book on the *flâneuse*, one chapter deals with Tokyo; this is the only chapter set in a context outside Europe or North America. Elkin confesses that she cannot walk this city. She writes:

> I am trying to listen. To let it signify. What it signifies I can't understand. I study the language, but it's like studying a few grains of sand to imagine the ocean floor. I give myself over to fragments; what else can I do? (Elkin 2016:167)

Like Elkin, I experienced the unfamiliar city as all fragment, all detail. I did not know how to assimilate or read it. As James Gibson writes, our perceptual process involves extracting invariants from the flowing stimulus array, markers for what remains consistent among the potential disturbances of the landscape. The visual system hunts for comprehension and clarity, self-aware, and aware, at least conceptually, of what lies behind occluding edges (Gibson 2015: 238-9). However, where all is unfamiliar, it is much more difficult to identify what is consistent and what is a potential disturbance, whether in the moment of walking, or over the course of a day. Lacking quick comprehension, the visual system is on overdrive, and cannot rest. In that first attempt at drifting alone in Bengaluru (although my third visit to India), one impression followed the next so swiftly that I was forced into the moment, unable

to reflect on, to respond to, or even to remember the torrent of images. I was walking in a state of mild shock, in emergency-mode. The following year, attending meetings on the nearby Institute of Science campus, and spending three weeks resident on that same road, I realised that I was no longer in such perceptual crisis, even though much remained unfamiliar, and I sometimes walked alone.

The *flâneur* daydreams the city; the drifter wants to wake up, and then maybe re-dream it, or possibly the other way around, moving between imaginative disorientation and clear-eyed critique. Phil Smith writes: 'Drifts are for opening up the world, clearing eyes and peeling away the layers of spectacle, deception and that strange “hiddenness in plain sight” that coats the everyday' (Smith 2017: n.p.). This works well for the too-familiar space, less so for the unfamiliar one; however, walking in the unfamiliar space opens up the too-familiar self that walks, revealing expectations and habits that cannot be readily transferred. This includes the habits of the *dérive*, despite its apparent break with everyday walking.

For instance, I could not follow Smith's injunction to follow instincts and alleyways, chasing 'any intriguing detail' (Smith 2017: n.p.). Sharanya Murali, in her investigations of the *dérive* in Delhi and Mumbai, also notes that she realised very quickly that 'the Situationist *dérive* had "failed", in spite of my best efforts', due to the difference between Indian and European cities and the assumptions of gendered privilege implicit in much Situationist writing (2016:12). The suggestion for instinctive exploration tends to imply an idea of a clear demarcation between street and non-street, publicly accessible and domestic or group space. As Murali points out, this cannot be assumed in India, where spaces may be hybrid, so that walking into a space that appears accessible could actually be an intrusion. What might, in one context, be seen as assertion of the right to roam, becomes in another an arrogant assumption of a right of entry. My monolingual knowledge made me unfit for certain spaces: asking the way from a group of women, they re-directed me to a group of English-speaking men, who I had previously avoided. I was conscious of my own embodied presence, of whiteness as skin colour, of gender and vulnerability, yet without being certain how I might be interpellated as ‘other’ in this post-colonial situation.

Rather than a swift passage through instinctively-chosen alleyways, losing myself in the city’s labyrinth, it was enough, here, to walk slowly, to take time, to dwell in one moment at a time,

to consider my movements in the situation of the street, in order that the bewildering profusion of images before me might separate out somewhat, and my body relax as the light faded.

This experience invited new approaches to the *dérive*, highlighting the importance of paying attention, to self, place and those within it, as a negotiated encounter with, rather than an attempted subversion of everyday practices. I began to use drawing as a way of slowing down and extending that process of paying attention, 'a sort of listening in', as artist Liza Dimbleby puts it (2013). I did not try to make sketches while walking, but from a prolonged static position in a café, or park, or on my return, looking closely at photographs, or while seated watching outdoor dance and musical performance – or sometimes from the memory of walking. The process of sketching, unlike photography, may be a meditative working out of and into the relationship between the drawer and the subject.

It was only by zooming in on the detail of a photograph, in order to sketch it, that I noticed that every person in the street scene was looking at a smart phone, or that a dog guarded the beauty parlour. Alternatively, as I allowed my pen or pencil to trace the gestures of the quickly moving performers in front of me, the traces it made were echoes of the reflective impulses within my own body, as much as they were records of what was observed. Positionality, point of view, and failure… all these are built into the process of drawing.

Some drawings, indeed, record primarily the walker's gesture of walking. From Richard Long's *A Line Made by Walking* (1967) to the many experiments with GPS mapping, one can see the *dérive* itself as an act of drawing onto a place. For instance, Sarah Cullen, in *The City As Written By the City* (2004) records her walks by carrying a device that consists of a wooden box containing a pencil dangling over paper, thus while the marks are drawn or 'written by' the city, they record only its effect on her walking body. However, in *The Pleasure in Drawing*, Jean-Luc Nancy observes that in specifically *mimetic* drawing 'what is at stake each time is nothing less than: how does the world form itself, and how am I allowed to embrace its movement?' (Nancy 2013: 64). Although Nancy describes this as an urge to grasp the creative uprising of 'being in general', in the moment of drawing, this is surely also specific. He continues, in a chapter on the 'Pleasure of Relation', to describe the subject of drawing as:

> …a relational force…as much active as passive, an ability to affect and be affected – the force from the outside, or more precisely, the force of sharing and opening between an *inside* and *outside* which refer to one another. (Nancy 2013: 67)

When Asger Jorn and Guy Debord created their psychogeographic map, *The Naked City*, (1957), the swirling arrows linked fragmented place to place, indicating the subjective connections between 'ambiances' in a disintegrating Paris. To make a mark upon a surface animates the blank spaces between the marks, the line's energy inviting us to read that space in one or more particular ways, and always in relationship, as gesture, as embodied experience.

However, the provisionality of Jorn's splashed, swept and gestured lines in the psychogeographic document *Mémoires,* (Debord and Jorn 1959) suggests that this viewpoint is on the move. Deanna Petherbridge argues that drawing is difficult to define partly because it 'is an immanence, always pointing to somewhere else – to a chain of serial development, another condition, another state' (Petherbridge 2008:37). The drawings I make are part of a process of meeting with another country, another kind of street. They are drafts, incomplete and inconclusive – sketches for something else. I make them as I used to make sketches of my school friends, drawn in pen and watercolours on the lined pages of my diary, doodles that bloom into illuminated manuscript.

Such drawings are the traces of both the difficulties and playfulness of subjective looking. They reflect an ethics of walking that, rather than attempting to 'reclaim the streets', intends to tread lightly, as if entering a stranger's house.

Mumbai

On January 16th, 2017, I walked with artists Ranjit Kandalgaonkar and Shrikant Agawane in Mumbai, contacts I had made through London friends, and whose engagement with the city interested me. We began somewhere towards the Southern end of Kalbadevi road, in the part of the former 'native town' of colonial Bombay known as Bhuleshwar, between Fort and Girgaum.

This expedition, part tour, part *dérive*, was marked by archways and doors, and the cautious application to be allowed entry. Kaiwan Mehta gives these *wadis* careful explication in his

studies of the area, explaining the significance of this architecture of residencies around courtyard spaces, often tenancies managed by a trust (Mehta 2009). Kandalgaonkar later tells me that the *dwaar*, the gateway that marks out the separate space of the charitable trust, sparked his initial interest in such organisations, arising during explorations of old neighbourhoods in collaboration with architects Saurabh Vaidya and Aditya Potluri for the research project *Gentricity* (2007) (Kandalgaonkar 2018). The restrictions of access, the semi-private domains of these trusts often required patient and extensive negotiation in order to enter, even for someone at home in Mumbai.

On our walk, the ornate doorways, often open, but not welcoming, presented an ambiguous dividing line. A glimpse through an archway, of cows running loose in a courtyard in Javer Baug, a startling muddle of rippling hump backs, curved horn and big eyes, presented the unexpected contiguity of animals, temple and living spaces, reserved from, yet open to the street.

On this occasion we were granted access. The temple was being renovated, visitors to their celebrations would be welcome. We watched the slow, expensive restoration as Rajasthani workmen slotted together parts of a large wooden cradle for use in celebrating the birth of Krishna. A more familiar style, to my British eyes, was the twentieth century, art deco style metalwork (iron from London), unexpectedly juxtaposed with old, elaborate carvings.

Kandalgaonkar's artistic and research interest in philanthropic trusts formally began in 2009, supported initially through a Research Fellowship with the Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI) in Mumbai, which funds research by young scholars and independent practitioners to add to the dialogue about urban issues affecting that city. He combines archival research, site visits and fine art to draw attention to some of the overlooked aspects of urbanisation. This work involves a kind of mapping, and a drawing out of links between past and present, interrupting the official record with the reverberation of unacknowledged histories. This exploration is, in some respects, the equivalent to examining unmapped spaces; in accompanying him, I am entering the tangled mess of a shared history in which all parties deliberately chose to keep some things vague. The act of drifting takes us into the contemporary manifestations of an activity with a long and complex history, whose resonance in the present is uncharted and unclear.

The 19th century British concept of the Charitable Trust (Charitable Trusts Act 1853) (where a trustee managed a gift from a donor, on behalf of a beneficiary) mapped awkwardly onto Indian traditions of gift for *dharma*. In particular, British imposition of distinctions between public and private benefit misread pre-Colonial practices of providing simultaneously for family and wider community. So, too, the imposed distinction between gift for religious purpose and government-controlled secular philanthropy (in 1890) designated all Indian endowments 'religious', ignoring their broader public benefit, or their role in secular economic enterprise and status. Philanthropic and religious trusts were exempt from tax (from 1886), while private enterprises were not; moreover the charitable trust status supposedly included only those endowments intended *solely* for religious or charitable purposes, disallowing what Burla calls 'multitasking forms of endowment' (Burla 2009:79).

However, the rather disingenuous policy of so-called 'non-interference' in Indian culture meant that much was left vague, and trust activities might conveniently combine different ends so that it was difficult to distinguish between religious function, public charity and private interest. This not only led to further legal distinctions in the early decades of the twentieth century, but to some legal inventiveness – for instance, not only was the temple deity considered as a person, carrying the status of a child whose wealth must be managed; but god could also be subject to tax, should the temple property be used for commercial gain (see Burla 2009:68-103).

Due to such legal ambiguities, the many endowments in Bhuleshwar have represented various advantages to the giver – a ritual act of devotion; the pragmatic avoidance of tax; a way of securing property and wealth in perpetuity for a community or family; and the means of providing in various ways for the needs of family, local community or wider publics. The emphasis in each case has not always been particularly clear cut, and has often been the subject of legal dispute, right up to the present day.

Agawane, my other companion, has made the only film I am aware of that surveys walking as a cultural practice in India. *Walking in the City* (2014) links ritual and functional walking, *flâneurie*, and walking art in a portrait of walking in Mumbai. Although our walk was driven by Kandalgaonkar's project, Agawane's observations on walking framed my experience, as, while his friend spoke to the residents and caretakers, he spoke to me about walking, the slow pace it allowed, the state of mind it enabled, the fascination of

shadows, the importance of doing nothing. This chimed with my own sense of the need to slow down perception, rather than to avoid engagement, or to become overwhelmed by disorientation. For Kandalgaonkar, too, taking time is important, particularly in considering the ethics of his research project. The practices of the philanthropic trusts are not readily understood, and without aspiring to get ‘right to the bottom of it’, there is a need to engage carefully, and pay attention to the ‘everyday lived practices’ they express, to avoid assumptions that the trust is merely a response to government tax laws, or even primarily that (Kandalgaonkar 2018).

'No photos' read a notice at the Bombay Panjrapole Trust, perhaps the best known of those we saw. In his collection of images and texts (2010), Kandalgaonkar represents this trust with a violent image of Sepoys brandishing weapons in an onslaught towards a frightened pig - referring to the fact that in 1832, hygiene conditions in the barracks caused the British to order that pigs and dogs should be shot on sight. This angered the locals, leading to the first recorded riot in Bombay. The trust was established by leaders of the Parsi and Hindu communities working together, negotiating the cessation of violence against the dogs, and founding the organisation in 1834, as a shelter for strays.

There are no dogs there any more, with cows the overwhelming animal presence. One cannot tell that the cows were originally brought there to give milk for the dogs, the latter now moved elsewhere. The trust used to be supported by rents, but when Rent Control froze this income in 1947, the funds dwindled. Milk is now sold, and in 1971, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of workers protesting their wages, that the milk production and property management constituted an industry, rather than a charity, though the maintenance of sick animals did not. This continued to be disputed by the trust, however, on the grounds that milk production was minimal, and donated to the sick. As so often, the facts of the matter are obscure.

Besides the many cows in the central barns, even the tiniest, least remarkable birds were perched in cages when we visited. The previous week's kite festival (*Makar Sankranti*) had its casualties, when glass on some of the kite strings hurt the birds, I learned. In one barn were 'special' cows - specially holy, since their colour or physicality was unexpected. You could pay to feed the animals, to gain good karma. Cats wandered about, between and among the

cowsheds. The practice of '*jivdaya*', 'giving life to', Kandalgaonkar notes, 'is applied to all forms of animal life' (Kandalgaonkar 2010: n.p).

Agawane bent down, gently picked up a kitten by the neck, removing it from the path of a water truck.

As in depicting the origins of this trust, based on images from popular depictions of the riots, Kandalgaonkar's approach is to suggest some of the scope and activities of the trusts through drawings that do not directly illustrate and document, but rather respond to key themes emerging from his discoveries: here, the moment in history that gives rise to an enduring organisation. In the pamphlet published with UDRI, it is juxtaposed with related images, of the cow-headed gates of Gaiwadi*,* formerly a tract of land set aside for cows*;* a Jain following a painted trail to avoid stepping on ants; and another Jain caring for fish, ants and birds, in three panels referencing conventions of Jain art. These last two represent Khantinagar Munisavrat Swami Andheri Jain Temple and Charitable Trust, and Shesh Meghji Thoban Trust, respectively. Thus, rather than acting as records of the walks, or even of observed features (though in the gateway we see there is some element of this), they evoke actions, moments, artforms and concepts that relate to the historical and contemporary practices of these varied spaces.

IMAGE

[Ranjit Kandalgaonkar b.1976 'The painted trail' - Stories of Philanthropic Trusts, 2010 - pencil on cartridge paper. In this image, the hashed lines are meant to depict the blurry surroundings that fade to the background.The inattention that the monk affords his surroundings is thus rendered so as to highlight his concentration on the trail by which he can see his path clearly and avoid stamping on minute life forms.]

Kandalgaonkar's drawings are part of his research process, products only in a provisional sense. Rather than seeking an individual style, he often references particular traditions of representation, sometimes presenting them as stylistically stripped back, appearing 'as data', that in one moment, encapsulates a process. Companionship is acknowledged in much of this work, as he is variously accompanied by others – for example in the second phase of the work, when seed funding from the Wellcome Trust along with collaborators - legal academic Brenna Bhandar and architect Vinita Gatne enabled a workshop at the Leprosy Asylum, or less formally, walking through Bhuleshwar in 2009-10, often with New Media scholar, Amit S.

Rai, who later writes of the sense of time passing in Kandalgaonkar's work, that his 'aesthetic aims to grasp the city's kinesis in moments of subtle transmutation, types of movement, patterns of interaction, forms of non-linear life':

> As a whole, [he] wagers that one can creatively become through these patterned but unpredictable movements, that a new habit of perception is necessitated once the imperceptible flows of the urban take on a certain urgency. (Rai 2013:277)

These drawings illuminate the processes of the charitable trusts in brief flashes, without betraying their autonomy or privacy. They both borrow from and write into the narratives and styles of colonial depictions and registers, from a place between temple trust and official record. There is no attempt to map the trusts comprehensively, and the ethics of the project demand that in fact, this is avoided. Too much exposure would make such organisations vulnerable, their current hold on space subject to intervention and disruption. Instead, the drawings articulate themes and narratives that counter some of the assumptions inherent in the categorisations adopted in the archives. The past in the present, as well as its erasures, are encountered on foot, and through personal exchange.

'Drawing, for me, is never complete', Kandalgaonkar tells me, citing John Berger on the unfinished qualities of a (working) drawing (Kandalgaonkar 2018). Berger writes that:

> …each mark you make on the paper is a stepping stone from which you proceed to the next, until you have crossed your subject as though it were a river, have put it behind you.
>
> This is quite different from the later process of painting a "finished" canvas or carving a statue. Here you do not pass through your subject, but try to recreate it and house yourself in it. (Berger 1953).

Drawing, in Berger's terms, is a curious visitor, not a resident. Commenting on an exhibition of 'Old Masters' (Raphael, Durer, Guercino, Guardi) he states, simply, 'in every instance, one senses their surprise' (Berger 1953).

The drawing marks a place where trajectories meet: what Doreen Massey calls 'a simultaneity of stories-so-far', the meeting points for co-existing narratives producing lived space. And

spaces, as she also reminds us, are always unfinished (Massey 2003:118). The drawing records a transitory encounter with a practice of living, already receding into the distance.

St Ives

On May 15th 2017, I went to St Ives with the hope that I might discover a familiar place anew by bringing to bear some aspects of walking in India. Having felt the interconnectedness of places and lives despite the unfamiliarity of the specific environment, I began, therefore, by looking for India in St Ives.

A naive search for cultural links with India yielded pretty scant results. On this dripping, misty, soft Cornish day, what could possibly connect them?

Among the painters associated with St Ives, Winifred Nicholson (who spent the summer there with husband Ben Nicholson, in 1928) had previously visited India with her father, Charles Henry Roberts, the former under-secretary of State for the colonial government. Winifred, then Winifred Roberts, was to say that she learned about colour and light from this visit, which also took in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and Myanmar (Burma). She wrote: 'I went to India, and noticed how eastern art uses lilac to create sunlight.' And again: 'I saw Violet in India, in the gossamer transparency of sarees, in white marble palaces, in white sunlight…" (W. Nicholson, quoted in J. Nicholson, 2016:12).

The importance of violet for Nicholson cannot be exaggerated, a ubiquitous presence in her paintings and conceived by her as a colour only visible to a few. It marks the edges of the rainbow, and the moment before colour collapses into darkness.

Nicholson was primarily a colourist, with line a secondary element in her painting. Rather than depicting lines of movement, her characteristic compositions suggest openings and thresholds where interior gives onto exterior, a splash of violet illuminating a sunlit vase, against gauzy blue distances. They also occupy a space between representation of a conventional subject (flowers) and abstraction (colours). In labelling her painting, *Window-Sill, Lugano* (1923), the Tate curators comment:

> Though the painting of flowers has been stereotyped as the preserve of women artists, Nicholson uses it here not as an expression of femininity, but as a pretext for

> experiments in technique. Like many progressive artists at this time she adopts a naïve or 'primitive' style in an attempt to unlearn traditional picture-making habits and generate a fresh vision of the subject.[2]

Is Nicholson's reference to Indian painting part of her attempt to 'unlearn (British) traditional picture-making habits'? To be fair to her, there is no suggestion that she regards this work as 'primitive', though this was certainly the modernist perception of work by working class artist, Alfred Wallis, the former sailor 'discovered' by the St Ives painters. The desire to 'unlearn' does, however, sail perilously close to cultural appropriation.

Can we detect in the Tate curator's comments, a note of approval that Nicholson is *not* expressing 'femininity' (I'm not sure that she is not)? The narrative of the St Ives school tends to begin with the arrival of Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood and their 'discovery' of Alfred Wallis in that summer of 1928. Winifred Nicholson's presence on this visit is frequently unremarked. While Nicholson is the offspring of British colonial India, she, like Wallis, is 'other' to the male avant-garde who 'colonise' St Ives, and her own significance as an artist, preoccupied with colour and light, is rendered less visible than her role as wife and mother. As artist, then, must these domestic roles be set aside? She is part of St Ives' history, if briefly, but until recently, was rarely represented or shown in Cornwall.

Nicholson's ambiguous status in St Ives suggests the uncertainty as to whether to regard the artists more broadly as colonial invaders or exiles. Nedira Yakir positions the suggestion that artists came to St Ives for the light as an 'exotic' fascination with St Ives as Arcadia. Instead, she says, we might see the arrival of artists as 'part of the massive population migration in Europe with the onslaught of the horrific war', motivated by the relative safety and availability of cheap lodging, and painting supplies (Yakir 2002:88). Yakir also points to literary articulations of St Ives as a haunted, stormy landscape. A place of exile and ghosts. On the other hand, as I drift St Ives, the sea is luminous, despite the grey skies.

St Ives, like most places, has its secondary histories – the ones the tourist trail does not pick out. This train of thought prompts me to look for them. The pilchard hut is indicated with a sign, but the old mines, running the length of the Stennack ('tinny') River, are not. When

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[2] This unattributed gallery label, dated 2010, is found on the Tate web page for the artwork, at https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/nicholson-window-sill-lugano-n05126, accessed August 13th, 2018.

Nicholson visited St Ives in 1928, the last mine had only recently closed. However, copper, tin and radium were all mined here. Hers was a post-industrial landscape. I went looking for the Pedn Olva copper mine, and found a hotel built over the old mineshaft: an image of what became of that industrial past, built over for tourists like myself to take possession of the sea view.

I found what seemed to be an old mine working on the end of Porthminster Beach, a slit cut into the cliff's side. 'Hidden in plain sight', as Smith puts it: a threshold into the ground itself.

I looked for other thresholds, going into all the little alleyways off the Digey that offer access along the back doors and to nowhere else and which feel like private space. In one alley, so quietly tucked away from the main street, I surprised a gull on its nest.

I scrambled between holiday lets to seek out Virginia Woolf's view across to the lighthouse. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf mentions India six times, as a place of exoticism, desire, adventure, precious commodities and white, male rule (Barad 2015). The semi-autobiographical nature of the book suggests Woolf's Anglo-Indian mother, Julia Prinsep Stephen, the model for Woolf's Mrs Ramsay, who was born Julia Jackson, in Calcutta. Nevertheless, the novel's second half, set in around 1920, a decade on from the opening section, depicts a world breaking away from, if partly mourning the stability of that patriarchal complacency, and Mrs Ramsay herself, the woman who supported it. A key figure is the painter, Lily Briscoe, whose painting, finished as Mr Ramsay and family arrive at the lighthouse, seems to balance the space between house and distance with her final, decisive line.

I walked up deserted, wet lanes, where the campion splashed magenta lights around a decaying green door, with a 'Danger' sign obscured by graffiti.

I did not find India in St Ives, but I did find empire.

Murali offers several provocations for 'de-colonising walking', asking for attention to the particularities and histories of architectural forms (including the blurring of boundaries and the ways in which spaces change). She points to the need to consider 'the matrix of site/body/practice/duration' (2016:83). And here, perhaps, I simply rediscover what she suggests: the need to ask what it means to be this person in this place, this walking woman in

this Cornish town, this town that I must confess I love with the passion of an intimate outsider, finding in my failure to answer ‘where is India?’, that India is not here, but that my walking in India prompts me to pay attention to the uneven and contradictory power dynamics emergent in situation and across time.

Empire is present in the way that it reverberates in homegrown patriarchy, the placid considerations of Mrs Ramsay, who thinks about the adventurous men in exotic India. It is echoed, if less virulently, in the exploitation of natural resources and local poverty. In the colonising artists followed by the colonising tourists. Empire has its submerged part to play, too, in the Cornish 'leave' vote, against self-interest, the result, it seems, of a passionate placefulness subject to fears of absorption and erasure within a global trading bloc.

For my walk, it is present in the question, specifically, of what to make of the contradictory position of Winifred Nicholson, daughter of Charles Henry Roberts, wife of Ben Nicholson, the ‘founding’ St Ives artist, mother of two boys and a girl: a colonial upper-class artist exile who, in an initial visit, ‘colonised’, yet never lived in this Cornish fishing village, encountered by her as a post-industrial mining town. Despite her privilege, she was also subject, the other artist, the othered woman the other woman (Barbara Hepworth) replaced.

In an artists’ sketchbook, place, time and person are all readable. One could also say that they are all rendered illegible, ambiguous, each aspect only articulated through reference to the others. The thresholds of Nicholson’s paintings are an intimation of the relationship between here and there, self and other, object and abstraction, interior and exterior. So are the thresholds of my own drifting.

There is a watercolour in Nicholson’s ‘Indian sketchbook’ of 1919. In it, greyish-green trees in the foreground emerge from a misty forest floor, backed by a view of deep, rounded violet hills over which grey cloud emerges. The precise detail of the trees evokes the strong light that burns above the mist, while the background remains a liquid suggestion of broad brush sweeps and blurred forms.

IMAGE

[*Indian Sketchbook*, 1919-1920, watercolour on paper, 23 x 30.5 cm’. Trustees of Winifred Nicholson.]

This painting contains echoes both of her encounter with the Indian landscape and of the influence of watercolour landscape paintings by, for instance, early twentieth-century artist Sawalaram Laxman Haldankar; it gestures forwards to her own paintings of vegetal detail and hazy distances. Its somewhat over-emphatic use of violet means it is not entirely free of exoticism. It is, however, a working out of near and far, a record of encounter and an expression of surprise - in a provisional mode, and all the better for that.

With many thanks to Ranjit Kandalgaonkar and Shrikant Agawane, for their generosity and patience.

Thanks also to Sharanya Murali

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